

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 IO-12 ADP-00 EURE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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P R 141751 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8333

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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USEC BRUSSELS UNN

USMISSION NATO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 PARIS 6354

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS: THE AFTERMATH

REF: PARIS 6034

1. SUMMARY. THE GOVERNMENT EMERGED FROM THE ELECTIONS WITH A SOLID WORKING MAJORITY IN THE ASSEMBLY. THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE MINOR GOVERNMENT COALITION PARTIES, GISCARD D'ESTAING'S INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS AND THE CDP, HAS INCREASED RELATIVE TO THE UDR BUT THE IDEOLOGICAL BALANCE OF FORCES WITHIN THE COALITION REMAINS LARGELY UNCHANGED. LECANUET AND SERVAN- SCHRIEBER'S REFORMERS WILL BE ABLE TO FORM A PARLIAMENTARY

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GROUP IN THE NEXT ASSEMBLY. WHILE THE ELECTION RESULTS ARE DISAPPOINT-

ING TO LEFT MILITANTS, COMMUNIST AND SOCIALIST LEADERS APPEAR TO HAVE ACHIEVED THEIR MINIMUM GOALS AND WE EXPECT THAT THE UNITED LEFT WILL MAINTAIN AT LEAST A MINIMUM LEVEL OF COOPERATION IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. PRESIDENT POMPIDOU AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS ARE NOW DEBATING THE COMPOSITION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT. WE ARE TOLD BY A SENIOR ELYSEE SOURCE THAT POMPIDOU IS EXTREMELY PLEASED WITH ELECTION RESULTS, BELIEVES HIS HANDS ARE ENTIRELY FREE TO BRING REFORMERS INTO THE GOVERNMENT OR NOT, BUT IS WILLING TO OFFER LECANUET AND ONE OR TWO OTHER REFORMERS (BUT NOT JJSS) MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS. ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE, PRESIDENT IS ALSO FULLY PREPARED

INITIATE MAJOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS, PARTICULARLY REFORMS WHICH WOULD ASSIST LEAST ADVANTAGED MEMBERS OF SOCIETY AND WOULD IMPROVE QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE. HE IS NOT, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO ELYSEE SOURCE, PREPARED TO CHANGE FOREIGN OR DEFENSE POLICES " ONE MILLIMETER". WE ARE TOLD PRESIDENT HAS NOT YET MADE UP HIS MIND ON COMPOSITION OF NEW GOVERNMENT BUT THAT CHOICE FOR PRIME MINISTER IS LARGELY BETWEEN MESSMER AND PRESENT MINISTER OF EQUIPMENT OLIVIER GUICHARD, WITH GISCARD D'ESTAING AS AN OUTSIDE POSSIBILITY. PRESIDENT WILL LIKELY REPLACE SCHUMANN AT FOREIGN AFFAIRS BUT, AS ELYSEE SOURCE INDICATED, " IT IS A DELICATE CHOICE AND THERE ARE MANY CONTENDERS." PRESIDENT WILL PROBABLY MAKE HIS CHOICE FOR NEW PRIME MINISTER KNOWN JUST PRIOR TO APRIL 2 OPENING OF PARLIAMENTARY SESSION. NEW GOVERNMENT LIKELY TO BE IN PLACE BY APRIL 5 OR 6. UNTIL THEN, PRESENT TEAM CONTINUES ON MORE OR LESS CARETAKER BASIS. FINALLY, WE DO NOT EXPECT SERIOUS LABOR UNREST OR BREAKDOWN OF SOCIAL ORDER IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE AS RESULT OF ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR RESULTS FOR ALL EXCEPT TWO OVERSEAS DISTRICTS, WHERE ELECTIONS POSTPONED UNTIL MARCH 18 BECAUSE OF HURRICANE CONDITIONS PREVAILING LAST SUNDAY, GIVE FOLLOWING BREAKDOWN FOR 488 OF 490 ELECTORAL DISTRICTS. GOVERNMENT COALITION: 261 SEATS, OF WHICH 184 UDR, 54 INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN AND 23 CDP. FOURTEEN SEATS ARE GIVEN TO CANDIDATES LABELED " DIVERSE MAJORITY". UNITED LEFT: 174 SEATS, OF WHICH COMMUNISTS 73, SOCIALISTS 89 AND LEFT REDICALS 12. PSU WON TWO SEATS AND " DIVERSE LEFT" FOUR. THE REFORMERS WON 28 SEATS AND INDEPENDENTS FIVE.

3. WHILE ALL DISTRICTS ATTRIBUTED TO THE GOVERNMENT COALITION AND
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" DIVERSE MAJORITY" WOULD GIVE THE GOVERNMENT 275 SEATS IN THE NEW

ASSEMBLY, THE FIGURE IS SLIGHTLY EXAGGERATED. SOME OF THE 14 DEPUTIES LISTED AS " DIVERSE MAJORITY" ARE ACTUALLY DEPUTIES WHO HAVE FORMALLY WITHDRAWN FROM THE GOVERNMENT COALITION, E. G., CHRISTAIN FOUCHE, WHILE OTHERS CLEARLY INTEND TO JOIN THE REFORMER GROUP IN THE NEXT ASSEMBLY. THEREFORE, THE GOVERNMENT WILL PROBABLY NOT BE ABLE TO COUNT ON THE FULL SUPPORT OF MORE THAN 265 TO 270 DEPUTIES. THIS WOULD GIVE THE GOVERNMENT AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF BETWEEN 20 TO 25 SEATS, WHICH BY FRENCH STANDARDS CAN BE CONSIDERED A COMFORTABLE WORKING MAJORITY. BARRING SOME TRAUMATIC AND UNFORESEEN DISAGREEMENT WITHIN GOVERNMENT COALITION RANKS, THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY, FOR EXAMPLE, OF THE LEFT AND THE REFORMERS CHIPPING AWAY AT THE GOVERNMENT COALITION AND EVENTUALLY MUSTERING ENOUGH STRENGTH TO CENSURE THE GOVERNMENT.

4. THE ELECTION WAS MUCH CLOSER THAN THE FIGURES INDICATE. THIRTY SEATS WERE DECIDED BY LESS THAN 300 VOTES, IN SOME CASES LITERALLY BY A HANDFUL OF VOTES, E. G., PTT MINISTER HUBERT GERMAIN WON BY 14 VOTES. ANOTHER 21 SEATS WERE DECIDED BY LESS THAN 1,000 VOTES. OF THESE 51 SEATS WELL OVER HALF WERE WON BY GOVERNMENT COALITION CANDIDATES. POMPIDOU' S LAST- MINUTE INTERVENTION (PARIS 6046- NOTAL) AND THE EXTRAORDINARILY HIGH SECOND- ROUND TURN OUT, MAY WELL HAVE TIPPED THE SCALES BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT COALITION WINNING AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OR ENDING UP SLIGHTLY UNDER THE 246 MARK.

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8334

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 PARIS 6354

5. SOMEWHAT UNEXPECTEDLY, BOTH MINOR GOVERNMENT COALITION PARITIES LOST A HANDFUL OF SEATS. GISCARD D'ESTAING' S INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS WITH 54 SEATS ARE DOWN SIX FROM THEIR PREVIOUS TOTAL. (AT ONE TIME THE IR' S HAD 62 SEATS IN THE ASSEMBLY BUT TWO OF THE INCUMBENT DEPUTIES DELCINED TO RUN THIS TIME SO THAT THE IR' S ENT INTO THE ELECTIONS WITH A TOTAL OF 60 SEATS). THE CDP, WITH ITS 23 SEATS, IS DOWN SEVEN FROM ITS PREVIOUS TOTAL. THERE ARE RUMORS THAT THE THREE COALITION PARTIES MAY EMERGE INTO A SINGLE GROUP IN THE NEXT ASSEMBLY

THE IR' S, HOWEVER, ARE REPORTEDLY COOL TO THIS MOVE SINCE THEY WOULD HAVE MORE INFLUENCE AND PUBLIC EXPOSURE IF THEY MAINTAINED THEIR SEPARATE STATUS. IF A SINGLE GROUP IS NOT FORMED, IT IS EXTREMELY PROBABLE THAT SOME DEPUTIES LISTED AS " DIVERSE MAJORITY" AND SOME

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LEFT- LEANING UDR DEPUTIES WILL JOIN THE CDP TO BRING ITS STRENGTH UP TO THE 30 DEPUTIES NECESSARY FOR A PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT BOTH MINOR PARTIES LOST SEATS, THEIR POSITIONS, PARTICULARLY THAT OF THE IR' S, WILL BE ENHANCED WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT COALITION. THEIR SUPPORT IS NOW NECESSARY FOR THE GOVERNMENT WHEREAS IT COULD HAVE BEEN DISPENSED WITH IN THE LAST ASSEMBLY WHERE THE UDR ALONE HAD AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF SEATS.

6. ALTHOUGH THE STRENGTH OF THE IR' S AND CDP' S HAS INCREASED RELATIVE TO THE UDR, THE IDEAOLOGICAL BALANCE OF FORCES WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT COALITION REMAINS SURPRISINGLY UNCHANGED. UDR LOSSES WERE ABSORBED ABOUT EQUALLY BY THE ORTHODOX GUALLIST WING AND BY THE PROGRESSIVE, MODERATE GUALLIST WING. IF ANYTHING, THE COALITION APPEARS SLIGHTLY MORE CONSERVATIVE. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THIS FACT WILL HINDER GOVERNMENT REFORM EFFORTS, AT LEAST INITIALLY, SINCE ALL FACTIONS OF THE COALITION APPEAR TO RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR SOME SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM.

7. LECANUET AND SERVAN- SCHRIEBER STILL APPEAR TO BE WORKING IN TANDEM AND ARE TRYING TO ESTABLISH A REFORM PARLIAMENTARY GROUP IN THE NEXT ASSEMBLY. THEY CLAIM ALREADY TO HAVE THE NECESSARY 30 MEMBERS. OF THE 28 REFORM DEPUTIES ELECTED, THE LION' S SHARE ARE MEMBERS OF LECANUET' S CENTER DEMOCRATIC PARTY. WHETHER A

REFORM GROUP, IF CONSTITUTED, WOULD HAVE MUCH STAYING POWER IS AN OPEN QUESTION. IF LECANUET ENTERS THE GOVERNMENT, IT MIGHT WELL BE THAT THE REFORMERS WILL SPLIT, WITH THEIR TWO WINGS MERGING RESPECTIVELY INTO THE GOVERNMENT COALITION AND INTO THE " DIVERSE LEFT." SHOULD THIS HAPPEN, THE BI- POLARIZATION OF FRENCH POLITICS WILL HAVE BECOME COMPLETE. THERE WILL BE NO ORGANIZED GROUP BETWEEN THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT BLOCS IN THE ASSEMBLY.

8. WHILE THE LEFT CERTAINLY DID NOT REALIZE THE EXPECTATIONS OF MANY OF ITS MORE ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORTERS, IT DID ACHIEVE THE REALISTIC GOALS OF PARTY LEADERS. WITH 73 SEATS, 21 PER CENT OF THE VOTE AND AN UNEQUALLED ORGANIZATION, THE COMMUNISTS MAINTAINED THEIR STRONG POSITION WITHIN THE LEFT OPPOSITION. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THE OPPOSITION TO PRESENT A REALISTIC " LEFTIST" OR " SOCIALIST" ALTERNATIVE TO THE PRESENT REGIME THAT EXCLUDES THE PCF. MARCHAIS AND THE PCF GAINED IN RESPECTABILITY AND THE LEFT ENDED UP WITH A FRACTION MORE
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AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
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10. THERE ARE ALMOST AS MANY COMBINATIONS OF PARTIES AND PERSONALITIES PROPOSED FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT AS THERE ARE POLITICAL COMMENTATORS IN PARIS. THE MOST PERSISTENT AND PLAUSIBLE RUMORS HAVE IT THAT POMPIDOU WITH EITHER (A) LEAVE MESSMER IN PLACE AS PRIME MINISTER AND SHAKE UP THE REST OF THE GOVERNMENT, BRINGING IN ONE OR TWO REFORMERS INCLUDING LECANUET AND A NUMBER OF YOUNGER DEPUTIES; OR (B) CHANGE MESSMER, LEAVING SOME MAJOR PORTFOLIOS IN THE SAME HANDS AND BRINGING IN A FEW NEW FACES. SENIOR ELYSEE SOURCE TOLD POLITICAL COUNSELOR ON MARCH 14 THAT PRESIDENT POMPIDOU HAS NOT MADE UP HIS MIND AS YET ON THESE KEY QUESTIONS. HE CONSIDERS OLIVIER GUICHARD OR MESSMER AS BEST PRIME MINISTERIAL CHOICES, WITH VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING AS AN OUTSIDE POSSIBILITY. HE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY REPLACE FOREIGN MINISTER
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SCHUMANN, WHO LOST HIS ELECTION RACE. HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT DECIDES, IT APPEARS INCUMBENT UPON HIM TO MAKE AT LEAST SOME DRAMATIC, SYMBOLIC CHANGES TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE ELECTORATE'S EXPRESSED WISH FOR REFORM. WE EXPECT HE WILL OFFER LECANUET AND ONE OR TWO OTHER REFORMERS PORTFOLIOS. THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE IS OFTEN MENTIONED AS A POSSIBLE MINISTRY FOR LECANUET. (WHETHER LECANUET WILL AGREE TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT ON THESE TERMS IS STILL OPEN TO QUESTION).

11. MAJOR TRADE UNIONS HAVE ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTION TO PRESS THE GOVERNMENT COALITION TO FULFILL AT LEAST ITS CAMPAIGN PROMISES. TO THIS END, UNIONS ARE CONVENING THEIR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES TO PLAN TACTICS AND STRATEGY. WE DO NOT EXPECT, HOWEVER, A PERIOD OF SERIOUS LABOR UNREST IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED IS INCREASED STRIKE ACTIVITY LATER IN THE SPRING IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT MAKE SERIOUS EFFORTS, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE UNIONS, TO MEET AT LEAST THEIR MINIMUM SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEMANDS: A 1,000 FRANC MONTHLY MINIMUM WAGE, AND RETIREMENT AT AGE 60. THE SOCIAL CLIMATE WILL ALSO DEPEND GREATLY ON WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT IS ABLE TO CONTROL RETAIL PRICES. IN SPITE OF SOME OBVIOUS INEQUALITIES IN THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM, THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS WERE SUCH THAT IT SHOULD NOT APPEAR TO THE AVERAGE FRENCHMAN THAT THE LEFT WAS CHEATED OF VICTORY BY TECHNICALITIES. WE EXPECT, THEREFORE, THAT THE LEFT WILL ACCEPT THE VERDICT OF THE VOTERS AND WILL TAKE UP ITS ROLE OF DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION IN THE ASSEMBLY. BUT AT THE SAME TIME IT WILL NOT ALLOW EITHER THE GOVERNMENT OR THE PUBLIC TO FORGET THAT IT RECEIVED 46 PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE. WE DO NOT FORESEE A BREAKDOWN OF PUBLIC ORDER, STREET DEMONSTRATIONS,

RIOTING, ETC. IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, FLOWING DIRECTLY FROM THE ELECTIONS.

12. COMMENT: IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW PRESIDENT POMPIDOU WILL RESHAPE HIS GOVERNMENT. OUR GUESS IS THAT THE PRESIDENT AND THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL ATTEMPT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM ON THE ORDER OF A " MINI NEW DEAL" FOR FRANCE. WE ARE TOLD REFORMS WILL CENTER ON TWO AREAS: HELP FOR LEAST ADVANTAGED MEMBERS OF SOCIETY AND IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY OF LIFE WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON URGAN PROBLEMS. MUCH MORE WILL BE KNOWN ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S PLANS IN THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS AREA AFTER HE NAMES A NEW FOREIGN MINISTER. BUT FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENSE REINS REMAIN FIRMLY IN CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PRESIDENT'S HANDS AND WE DO NOT EXPECT MAJOR INNOVATIONS IN FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY AS A RESULT OF THE ELECTIONS. CONTINUITY IN FOREIGN POLICY SHOULD BE EASY TO MAINTAIN SINCE, IN SPITE OF THE LECANUET CHALLENGE, FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES PLAYED LITTLE ROLE IN THE CAMPAIGN. ELYSEE SOURCE MENTIONED ABOVE FIRMLY STATED PRESIDENT POMPIDOU WAS NOT INCLINED TO CHANGE HIS FOREIGN OR DEFENSE POLICIES " ONE MILLIMETER". GDS
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